

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 12782 191018Z

44

ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03 H-02

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PRS-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EB-07

COME-00 ACDA-05 MC-02 USIA-06 /073 W

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R 191007Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3915

SECDEF

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USCINCEUR

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MARR, MILL, NATO, UK, FR, GW

SUBJECT: "BUY BRITISH"

SUMMARY. THERE IS INCREASING EVIDENCE THAT THE BRITISH ARMY--WHICH WANTS THE HOT AEROSPATIALE/MBB CONSORTIUM'S MISSILE AS ITS HELICOPTER MOUNTED ANTI-TANK MISSILE-- WILL HAVE TO TOLERATE A DELAY IN THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO PROVIDE IT WITH A MODERN ANTI-TANK MISSILE. END SUMMARY.

1. AT PRESENT THE ARMY CONSIDERS THE FRANCO-GERMAN HOT, THE US TOW AND THE BRITISH HAWKSWING MADE BY THE BRITISH AIRCRAFT CORPORATION (BAC) AS SUITABLE FOR HELICOPTER USE. ALTHOUGH THE ARMY REFUSES TO SAY SO "OFFICIALLY" THERE CAN BE LITTLE DOUBT THAT OF THE THREE ANTI-TANK GUIDED MISSILES IT PREFERS THE HOT FOR USE ON ITS HELICOPTERS. HOWEVER, THE BAC HAWKSWING, RATED A POOR THIRD AS A RESULT OF DISAPPOINTING SHOWINGS IN RECENT TRIALS, CANNOT BE WRITTEN OFF ENTIRELY. AN APPEAL BY TRADE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 LONDON 12782 191018Z

UNIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT "TO BUY BRITISH" COULD HAVE A

DIRECT BEARING ON THE SELECTION--PARTICULARLY SINCE
PETER SHORE (MINISTER OF TRADE) HAS BEEN PUBLICLY URGING
PEOPLE "TO BUY BRITISH."

2. FOR EXAMPLE, THE WORKERS AT BAC'S STEVENAGE PLANT
RECENTLY PROPOSED THAT BAC SHOULD PRODUCE A MODIFIED
SWINGFIRE MISSILE (A LONG-RANGE WIRE-CONTROLLED ANTI-TANK
GUIDED MISSILE WHICH IS THE MAIN ARMAMENT OF STRIKER, THE
GUIDED WEAPON VARIANT IN THE NEW CVR(T) RANGE OF VEHICLES
NOW IN FULL OPERATIONAL SERVICE) WHICH WOULD BE MADE
"MAN-PORTABLE" IN PLACE OF THE FRANCO-GERMAN MILAN (WHICH
IS LIGHT, EASY TO USE, HAS A 2,000 PLUS METRE RANGE AND
ALREADY IS IN USE IN SOME EUROPEAN ARMIES).

3. THE HOUSE OF COMMONS EXPENDITURE COMMITTEE IN A RE-
CENT REPORT ON BRITISH FORCES IN GERMANY MADE AN UNEQUIV-
OCAL RECOMMENDATION THAT THE BRITISH ARMY PURCHASE MILAN.
IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT IF THE MILITARY SELECT A
"FOREIGN SOLUTION" THIS COULD STIMULATE SUFFICIENT TRADE
UNION AGITATION TO FORCE A DELAY IN THE GOVERNMENT'S
DECISION OR EVEN TO FORCE A "BUY BRITISH" DECISION.
THERE IS A GROWING DANGER THAT IN BRITAIN TODAY,
DECISIONS CONCERNING THE SELECTION OF CERTAIN WEAPON
SYSTEMS MAY GET MIRED IN THE POLITICS OF TRADE UNIONISM
AND THE PYROTECHNICS OF "BUYING FOREIGN."

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMED FORCES, MILITARY PROCUREMENT, MILITARY EQUIPMENT, MISSILES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 AUG 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LONDON12782
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750286-0159
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750840/aaaabizx.tel
Line Count: 88
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION PM
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 APR 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <24 APR 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: "BUY BRITISH" SUMMARY. THERE IS INCREASING EVIDENCE THAT THE BRITISH
TAGS: MARR, MILI, UK, FR, GE, NATO
To: STATE DOD
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006